

with the old system, is highly appreciated by the tenants,—themselves, be it observed, a superior class of persons to that for whose accommodation the building was originally projected. There seems only one substantial objection to the same plan being carried out on a handsomer scale for the middle classes; and that is the repetition, here adopted, of the ordinary common staircase to each separate block of dwellings. These means of ascent and descent should, I conceive, be not only far more spacious, far better lighted and ventilated, than by such repetition it is possible to contrive them; but, in lieu of the pernicious comparative privacy thus imparted to them, the architect should adopt every means to make them as nearly as possible assimilate in publicity to the streets, to and from which they are intended as the *media* of communication.

In the parish of St. Giles, another somewhat analogous project has been carried into execution, in the erection of a pile of club chambers, with separate dormitories and a common dining-room, library, and reading-room. If I mistake not, they are simply intended for the occupation of casual nightly tenants, in lieu of the low night lodging-houses about London: but as some such arrangement as this has been often suggested for the permanent occupation of the poor, a doubt may here be hazarded as to its desirableness. Such institutions must have a tendency to break up society into clubs and coteries, to the destruction of that domestic comfort and independence so conducive to the well-being of every class.

Another pile of model dwellings to which allusion should be made, is now in course of erection in Bloomsbury, from the designs, and under the direction of Mr. Henry Roberts. The plan comprises a stack of nine dwelling-houses on each floor; approached, not from the confined landings of a small pent-up staircase, common to a single block of chambers one above another, but from spacious galleries, open to the air,—themselves approached by one large stone staircase, common to the entire stack, under the control of a resident porter. An illustrated account of this building* is contained in the present volume of *THE BUILDER*. This is a great advance upon the ordinary plan: if only to mention one obvious advantage it possesses,—the means provided for the prevention of the spread of contagion from house to house.

In Liverpool, Glasgow,† and elsewhere, piles of this description of property are springing up, but enough has been said of what is doing in London to denote the restlessness of the public mind in relation to the improvement of town dwellings.

It will be seen that all the plans here described have for their object the abandonment of the present system of housing the labouring classes in the thickly peopled districts of the metropolis; and having already shown that the very reasons that have conjured them into being, apply with, if anything, greater force to the middle classes, I ask at once, why cannot a more consistent class of dwellings be contrived for their use? The question is by no means singular, and has been more than once put by non-professional querists, as may be seen in this journal.‡

The plan I venture to propose is described in the accompanying illustrations. It has been mainly suggested by seeing the description of Mr. Roberts's mode of arrangement already referred to. The lower houses are proposed to be entered (as now) at once from the street. They might be constructed with or without a basement story, in the former case retaining the usual sunk area, and departing somewhat from the general plan, or, if laid out as shops or offices, be brought forward to the street pavement, as shown by the light portion of the ground plan annexed. The upper houses would be entered from the street by open galleries or colonnades, accessible at the extremities of each row or terrace by a well-lighted spacious double stone staircase, of publicity equal to that of the street itself, on every landing of which the surveillance of a resident porter or keeper could be directed, for its orderly

security and neatness of condition. The subordinate offices are placed in front, looking on to the colonnades or galleries: these might have the glazing of their windows obscured, or the windows themselves placed at such a height from the floor as to secure them from being overlooked by the passers-by. The principal living and lodging-rooms are placed at the rear, and are intended to overlook a spacious square or garden, common to the two stacks of terraces: it is presumed that the usual superficial area assigned to the private back yards or gardens of an ordinary house will, with the fence walls dispensed with, amply provide for such spacious common garden as is here described. It would be planted and laid out as a promenade for such of the families in each terrace as might be willing to pay a small annual fee for the privilege. Property like this would of course, as at present, have its more expensive tenements and its more distinguished tenants on the lower flats or terraces; and if carried up many stories high, which, when the infrequency of its occupants' journeys up and down stairs is considered, it might very well be, would perhaps exhibit a great discrepancy between the condition of its denizens on the first and that of those on its uppermost terraces; but I conceive the presence about the grounds of an artisan from the topmost terrace, who possessed refinement enough to induce him to the yearly payment of a guinea for the healthy recreation of his family, ought not to disturb the equanimity of the most fastidious tenant below. However, should this be found a difficulty, the roofs might be formed into one large exercising terrace for the occupants of the upper flats or terraces only, leaving the gardens for the use of those on the lower terraces.

Should objections be raised to the collision of different classes or sexes on the staircases, the fact of each flight being a double one, amply lighted by day and night, and open to the ken of its parallel neighbour, as also that of the keeper and his family, should be borne in mind: and to such as may be urged against the novel necessity hereby created for postmen, milkmen, &c. &c., ascending and descending to and from the upper houses, a moment's reflection on the greater evil that would be thus avoided, viz., the continual daily travelling of servants and females up and down stairs in our already lofty houses, an evil that seriously militates against their cleanliness and order, will, it is assumed, be enough to prove the greater convenience of the plan proposed.

Of no small moment in the consideration of any plan of this description is the name of, or address that can be given at, each respective dwelling; as any one who reflects on the present artificial condition of the middle classes of the metropolis will perceive. Thus, in the plan proposed, each street might have, independently of its own name, its locality denoted by the name of the square or pleasure-ground attached to the houses in it; the dwellings on the ground floor being, of course, designated as at present. Whatever might be the number of each house on the ground floor might (for the convenience of cab-drivers, &c., drawing up to the highest staircase) apply also to the houses above its individual site; and "Third-terrace," "Second-terrace," and "First-terrace," might represent the positive, comparative, and superlative degrees of gentility.

The plan represents the extremity of one row or stack of terraces, comprising two blocks of dwellings, and one of the double stone staircases intended to be placed at the corners of each street, or in very long thoroughfares at smaller intervals, as the intelligence of the builders might suggest. Over the piazzas leading from each street are landings, conducting at once to the open galleries on each terrace or flat. The porter's office attached has a private staircase, two or three bed-rooms above, and an office again on the topmost story. The remaining dark portion of the plan shows the arrangement of each block of dwelling-houses, assuming the non-existence of a basement story, and is, of course, repeated for that description of property throughout the stack. The superficial area occupied by each dwelling-house, devised merely as a sample of an average class, is equivalent to that allowed to a second-rate house, according to the provisions of the Metropolitan Buildings' Act. The walls and par-

titions are, as in all model dwellings, superincumbent from bottom to top; thus the buildings would readily be constructed fire-proof, or the partitions formed at least of brick nogging, with the floors sound-boarded and pugged. Each house has a dust-shaft, with a coal place on an intermediate floor; the coals for each dwelling being delivered into a shoot from the gallery or terrace overhead, placed some five feet above the level of such gallery floor.

The deviation from the dwelling-house plan shown by etching the second block is merely introduced for the sake of exemplifying the mode in which, without greater violation to the ordinary rules of construction than we are now guilty of, the ground stories are capable of being originally built as, or subsequently altered into, shops or offices.

Fresh air for each dwelling could, of course, be supplied by air bricks or revolving valves; and vitiated air discharged, by perforations or centre flowers in the ceilings of each room, into air trunks or drains, built between each floor, and terminated at their two extremities by air bricks, so as always to secure a brick current throughout their extent from front to back: a system, this, similar to that adopted by the Poor-Law Commissioners.

Many other suggestions might be added, as, for instance, the introduction of large lifts or "hoists" for heavy goods, or even sick persons, and many details gone into, to which the plan is not only capable of accommodation, but in many cases solely so. To these, however, for the sake of simplification, it will be well to avoid allusion.

Whatever may be thought of the popularity of such a plan as is here proposed, and (knowing John Bull's respectable aversion to all fireside innovations) I must confess to some doubts on that head,—there can, it is presumed, be no doubt whatever of its superiority to the ordinary dwelling-house arrangements, which three-fourths of the inhabitants now enjoy,—whether on the score of sound construction, safety from fire and the spread of contagious fevers, or general comfort and privacy.

One advantage of such a plan of house-building is its greater economy of space, if not of actual outlay on the building itself, consequent on the omission of the separate staircases now required for each block of dwellings. A saving in ground rent in London is a matter of no trifling import; and when it is recollected that a staircase, with its ordinary mahogany handrail, &c., is one of the most expensive features of a modern house, it is at least questionable whether the open galleries proposed to supersede them can fairly be objected to as costly features over and above what are incurred by the ordinary plan.

Nor must the facility thus afforded for building even loftier houses than we now do, though cursorily alluded to already, be omitted from the list of advantages that would accrue from such a plan as this. Omnibuses, as we now employ them, are, it is true, a mode of transit from corner to corner of town which would indeed surprise our grandsires, could they retrace our streets; but, whoever considers the rapidity with which our modern Babylon, with its "two millions," is diverging with brick and mortar into the suburbs, must admit that these vehicles will soon—in fact, have already—become intolerable. Omnibuses "for the million" are not enough, and how to move about town is really becoming a serious problem for solution.

That such a plan would, if adopted, supply another desideratum, a means for designing houses architecturally, or at least symmetrically, and thus perchance rid London of its tawdry bedizenment, applied the thickest where our façades are the most lop-sided, there can I conceive be little doubt. Richly designed shop façades, if introduced in streets built on such a plan, would no longer present wide gaping chasms of plate glass, sustaining (somehow or other imperceptibly to the spectator), an overwhelming mass of superincumbent wall, four or five stories in height; but pier would stand over pier, and void over void; a thing impossible by our present mode of construction; and the density of our population, by rendering some such kind of street architecture imperative upon us, would, with the now seldom-sought aid of the architect, to not merely design but control their structure, be

* See page 327.

† Lumden's Model Dwellings for the Working Classes are described in Vol. 6, page 523 of this journal.

‡ See letter of "Sabbatani" in "Builder," Vol. 3, page 209.